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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000146

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR SA/FO AMBASSADOR QUINN, SA/CT AND SA/A  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND  
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFA-A, CG CJTF-76  
USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KARZAI MEETS WITH CODEL BAYH

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: IN A JANUARY 10 MEETING WITH SENATORS BAYH (D-IND) AND BOND (R-MO) AND REPRESENTATIVE FORD (D-TN), KARZAI OUTLINED THE PROGRESS AFGHANISTAN HAD MADE OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS, FOCUSING ON COUNTERNARCOTICS RATHER THAN TERRORISM AS THE REAL CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE. HE REITERATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE DID NOT WANT THE U.S. TO LEAVE. THE DELEGATION ASSURED HIM OF OUR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO AFGHANISTAN. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) KARZAI OPENED THE MEETING BY NOTING THAT HE HAD NOT FORESEEN THE SPEED AND SMOOTHNESS WITH WHICH THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS WOULD TAKE HOLD IN AFGHANISTAN; HE GAVE CREDIT TO THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, BUT SAID IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND THE UNITED STATES IN PARTICULAR. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE WERE WORRIED THAT THE U.S. WOULD WITHDRAW, WHICH "MAKES US NERVOUS AND ANGRY". SENATOR BAYH ASSURED THE PRESIDENT THAT, WHILE THERE MIGHT BE A DOMESTIC DEBATE ABOUT U.S. PRESENCE IN IRAQ, THERE WAS TOTAL UNANIMITY ABOUT STAYING THE COURSE IN AFGHANISTAN - "THIS IS A JOURNEY STILL IN PROGRESS AND WE ARE WITH YOU UNTIL THE END."

3. (SBU) KARZAI COMMENTED ON THE LARGE NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO HAD BEEN ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT (71 IN THE LOWER HOUSE), MANY OF WHOM HAD WON THEIR SEATS OUTRIGHT RATHER THAN THROUGH THE 25 PERCENT RESERVATION FOR WOMEN. HE GAVE THE EXAMPLE OF A FEMALE CANDIDATE IN HERAT PROVINCE, WHICH SENT 17 MPS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHO RECEIVED THE MOST VOTES OF THE 17, AS WELL CASES IN FARAH AND JALALABAD.

4. (SBU) AFTER REFERRING TO THE "LAZY AND CORRUPT" BUREAUCRACY, THE PRESIDENT CHARACTERIZED TERRORISM AS "DEFEATED" BUT NOT "COMPLETELY GONE". ATTACKS ON SOFT TARGETS, SUCH AS SCHOOLS AND CLERGY, WERE A SIGN OF THE TERRORISTS' INCREASING DESPERATION, HE SAID, AND WOULD ONLY MAKE THEM MORE HATED BY THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. POPPY CULTIVATION WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING AFGHANISTAN, IN KARZAI'S VIEW, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HIS PRELIMINARY INFORMATION INDICATED THAT POPPY CULTIVATION HAD DECLINED IN 11 PROVINCES THIS YEAR. (NOTE: HIS STAFF DEMURRED, SAYING THIS INFORMATION WAS ONLY ANECDOTAL, AND WHEN HE ASKED AMBASSADOR NEUMANN FOR HIS VIEWS, THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT, ALTHOUGH IT WAS TOO EARLY TO TELL, HE WOULD HAVE A BETTER FEEL AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE GOVERNOR-LED ERADICATION CAMPAIGNS. END NOTE)

5. (SBU) KARZAI DESCRIBED THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AS "EXCELLENT," COMMENTING ON THE FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN PAKISTANI EXPORTS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS. THE ONLY AREA OF FRICTION - "AND IT IS QUITE BITTER" - IS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. IF THE REGIONAL ELEMENT OF AL-QAEDA WERE HANDLED FORCEFULLY BY PAKISTAN, "THERE WOULD BE NO TWO COUNTRIES MORE FRIENDLY."

6. (SBU) IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM SENATOR BAYH, THE PRESIDENT DESCRIBED VOTING IN THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AS NOT "ENTIRELY" ETHNIC, PARTICULARLY IN LARGE URBAN CENTERS. HE ALSO GAVE EXAMPLES OF TAJIK-DOMINATED PROVINCES WHERE HE, A PASHTUN, HAD CARRIED THE VOTE. HE CHARACTERIZED THE VOTING PATTERNS IN THE PARLIAMENTARY AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS AS "SUB-ETHNIC" - TRIBE AND CLAN BASED. KARZAI SAID THE DECISIONS ON THE LEADERSHIP IN BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT WERE NOT DETERMINED BY ETHNICITY; FOR EXAMPLE, QANOONI, A TAJIK, RECEIVED THE VOTES OF ALL THE MPS FROM THE PASHTUN STRONGHOLD OF KANDAHAR. AMBASSADOR NEUMANN PRAISED PROFESSOR SAYYAF FOR BEING A GOOD LOSER AND ADVANCING THE CONCEPT (SOMEWHAT FOREIGN IN AFGHAN CULTURE) THAT LOSING IS NOT DISHONORABLE. KARZAI SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH ETHNICITY WAS PRESENT, IT WAS DISCUSSED MORE BY FOREIGNERS AND THE PRESS THAN IT WAS BY AFGHANS, WHO HAVE ALWAYS HAD A CONCEPT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY.

7. (SBU) SENATOR BOND, NOTING THAT ALL THREE MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION CAME FROM AGRICULTURAL STATES, OFFERED TO HELP AFGHANISTAN WITH AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT AND INPUTS TO ASSIST IN THE COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORT, AN OFFER WHICH THE PRESIDENT ENTHUSIASTICALLY ACCEPTED. WHEN ASKED BY REPRESENTATIVE FORD ABOUT OTHER AREAS WHERE HELP WOULD BE WELCOMED, KARZAI

MENTIONED TERRORISM AND THE DAY TO DAY LAW AND ORDER SITUATION, WHICH COULD BE IMPROVED BY BETTER POLICE TRAINING. WHILE 40,000 HAVE BEEN TRAINED, THE GOAL IS 80,000, KARZAI SAID. KARZAI EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR QUALITY, LONGER-TERM TRAINING FOR THE OFTEN ILLITERATE POLICE, NOTING THAT "QUICK IMPACT" ACTUALLY MEANS A PROJECT IS "NOT THERE TOMORROW". HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED FOR THE GOA TO INCREASE ITS TAX COLLECTION EFFORTS (ONLY 20 PERCENT OF CUSTOMS DUTIES ARE ACTUALLY COLLECTED) SO THAT AFGHANISTAN COULD BECOME LESS DEPENDENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S largesse.

18. (U) THIS CABLE WAS NOT CLEARED BY CODEL BAYH BEFORE THEY DEPARTED POST.  
NORLAND